



RIVER ALLIANCE
of WISCONSIN

March 13, 2023

RE: 2023 SB 58/AB 64

River Alliance of Wisconsin supports SB 58/AB 64 as a positive step in expanding the eligibility requirements for the well compensation grant program, but we believe the proposed changes do not go far enough to protect public health. A better proposal would make permanent the eligibility requirements used by [WDNR's application of 2021 ARPA funds](#).

It is a primary function of Wisconsin's government to protect citizens from basic public health hazards over which they have little control. Levels of nitrate in public and private drinking water wells continue to rise across the state. But bacterial and chemical contamination (e.g. PFAS) are also significant threats to public health. Overwhelmingly, these contaminants originate outside the property of the people whose wells are contaminated, for instance through agricultural runoff, firefighting foam application, or industrial pollution. With the failure to expand the NR 151 nitrate in groundwater rules and new PFAS rules still in development, we can expect this public health crisis to get worse over time.

The well compensation program is designed to help people right now who cannot drink their water because it is contaminated. This program only works if it is properly targeted to the population that needs it. While we support the expansion of eligibility represented by SB 58/AB 64, it does not go far enough to effectively protect the public. The eligibility requirements for the grant program should include all these provisions:

- Raising the family income limit to \$100,000
- Removing any requirement that the water be used to water animals
- Expanding the sources of contamination to include any substance of public health concern greater than or equal to a primary maximum contaminant level established by NR 809, Wisconsin Administrative Code or an enforcement standard established in ch. NR 140 Wisconsin Administrative Code

This would allow many more people to use the program who otherwise have few other remedies available to them. Finally, we would like to encourage aggressive action to prevent the contamination that makes this program necessary in the first place. It is almost always substantially more cost effective to prevent contamination than to remediate it later. It would also place responsibility for contamination on the ones who cause it, rather than on end users who have little control over avoiding it.

Forward,

Michael Tiboris
Policy Director
River Alliance of Wisconsin
mtiboris@wisconsinrivers.org
(608) 257-2424x125